



The Town of Fenwick Island

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS 2011 PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

What is the project?

Sidewalks on both sides of Coastal Highway, within the town limits of Fenwick Island, are being proposed. Concrete construction, curb cut-outs and crossovers that are compliant with regulations under the Americans with Disabilities Act will be designed.

Why is this project being considered?

The general lack of sidewalks in the town is a hazard to pedestrians, bicyclists and motor vehicle operators. It is fortunate that there have been no fatalities. There have been many “conflicts” between motorists and pedestrians or bicyclists during the Summer season, though.

The lack of sidewalks also presents a challenge to our retail businesses. Visitors who wish to patronize Fenwick Island businesses find it difficult to walk and most often drive. Once driving, it is just as convenient to patronize businesses in adjoining towns. This diminishes the viability of locating a business in the Town of Fenwick Island. There are several commercial vacancies.

How did this idea come about?

In 2001, the State of Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) identified Fenwick Island as an area in need of improvement. A study of conditions from the Maryland state line to the northern boundary of the Town of Fenwick Island was conducted by an engineering firm contracted by DelDOT. A working group consisting of citizens, businesses, elected officials and town staff met on several occasions from October 2001 through May 2002. A public meeting was held in August 2002 and there was unanimous agreement that pedestrian improvements are extremely desirable on the Coastal Highway corridor.

Coincident with this process, legislation known as Livable Delaware was proposed by Governor Minner and passed by the State Legislature (ref. HB 255, in 2001). Municipalities were required to complete comprehensive planning documents through a public planning process.

In 2004, there were three public planning workshops that received comments and direction from more than a hundred residents. The 2005 Comprehensive Plan and its updates continue to cite pedestrian improvements along Coastal Highway as desirable infrastructure enhancements. This document is certified by the State of Delaware and on file with the Office of State Planning and Coordination in compliance with Delaware Code Title 22, Section 702. It is also available for public inspection at the Fenwick Island Town Hall.

Pedestrian Improvement Project FAQ's

What has prompted the current study?

Infrastructure improvements, such as streets and sidewalks, are an expensive undertaking. The Town Council has chosen to defer this project until funding is made available through the State or federal government. The DelDOT study of this project that was completed in 2002 no longer appears on the list of transportation funding priorities.

In 2009, Congressional passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act made \$150 million available to government entities for economic development projects. The Delaware Economic Development Office solicited proposals to be included in a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) priority projects list. This competitive process of selection would result in a project being listed with the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) as eligible for funding. Up to 50% of the cost of the project may be funded through the EDA.

The sidewalk portion of the more comprehensive study was included in a proposal that was focused upon improving business opportunity and increasing the number of jobs available in the Town of Fenwick Island. The Fenwick Island Pedestrian Plan was submitted to the Delaware Economic Development Office in September 2009 and was approved for inclusion on the CEDS project priority list in November 2009.

During 2010, the requirements of an EDA grant request were considered. Having a more precise construction cost estimate was most important. The same engineering firm that contributed to the 2002 DelDOT study was contracted in October. Their study will help to determine not only construction costs but also easement needs and a design that is compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

What steps will be taken, now?

At the December 2010 regular Council meeting, Mayor Serio provided a report on the first meeting between Landmark Engineering and the Town Council. Notice of a follow-up meeting in late January will be published and the public is welcome to attend. Consistent with EDA grant requirements, the support of citizens, businesses, DelDOT, the Bethany Fenwick Area Chamber of Commerce and Sussex County are an integral part of developing a complete proposal.

A grant application may be submitted in the Spring of 2011. If it is approved by EDA, the project may commence in the Fall. The outcome should be a demonstrable improvement of economic activity in our commercial district. As an added benefit, long-sought pedestrian safety improvements will be made as well. One-half of the funding will be grant-supported. One-half of the funding will be provided through reserves in realty transfer taxes. Property taxes and other fees that support the operating budget *will not* be affected by this capital improvement project.